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ABSTRACT

Initiated in 1980 with two telecourses on educational access television, the distance education (DE) program at Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) currently includes over 35 credit and continuing education telecourses, 160 teleconferences downlinked annually, community forums on public television, and award winning educational television series. All the requirements for an associate in arts degree can be fulfilled via telecourses, except for a 3 credit hour speech and a 1 credit hour laboratory class, while the number of college credit students taking telecourses has increased from 3,976 in 1989-90 to 6,012 in 1994-95. The college also offers computer-based courses, mailing students electronic bulletin board software allowing them to access course materials, participate in discussions, and post assignments. DE at the college is a collaborative effort by the assistant instructional dean, answering to the president of FCCJ's Open Campus; the telecourse office; and the television production unit, handling all technical aspects of telecourse production and delivery. Faculty, who teach telecourses as part of their regular workload, are responsible for the academic and instructional integrity of courses. The same examinations and grading procedures are used for DE and on-site courses, while students can choose to take exams on campus or at four testing locations administered by the telecourse office. Finally, FCCJ has participated in cutting-edge DE projects, such as a 1991-93 Department of Defense initiative to deliver military occupational training via video courses. (BCY)

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Distance Education at Florida Community College at Jacksonville

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DISTANCE EDUCATION AT FLORIDA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE

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College Overview

Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) is a public, two-year comprehensive community college enrolling over 94,000 students annually in a variety of academic, training and enrichment courses and programs. FCCJ is the 2nd largest community college in the state and the 10th largest in the nation, and is accredited by the Commission of Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the associate degree.

Starting in 1980 with two telecourses on educational access cable television, the distance education program at FCCJ now includes over 35 credit and continuing education telecourses, 160 teleconferences downlinked annually, community forums on public television, the production of award-winning educational and informational television series, pilot projects and technological innovations.

In 1987 the Open Campus was established to better serve non-traditional populations with college credit and continuing education courses and activities. Distance education is an integral part of the mission of Open Campus, which provides leadership and management for FCCJ's distance learning activities.

In 1991-93 FCCJ participated in the design and delivery of a pilot project for the U.S. Department of Defense which utilized an interactive, two-way compressed video and VSAT system to deliver a combination of military training and college credit instruction. A unique activity for a community college, this teletraining project demonstrated both the technical capacity of Florida's community colleges to deliver instruction via a sophisticated telecommunications system as well as the instructional design expertise of community college faculty and staff. More detail about this project is provided at the end of this chapter.

Program Overview

Students Served & Programs Offered

Distance education at FCCJ strongly supports the college's institutional mission of excellent teaching, meaningful learning, and student success. FCCJ serves college credit students seeking an associate degree, local community members interested in continuing education and personal/professional development opportunities, regional and state agencies requiring training or curriculum development, and a national audience of educational institutions seeking video-based instructional materials.

Telecourse students are the largest and most significant group of distance learners at FCCJ. With over 6,300 students enrolled in 35 college credit telecourses each year, FCCJ's distance learning program is the largest in the state. Telecourse offerings include courses in American history, accounting, algebra, anthropology, biology, business law, chemistry, economics, computer science, English, French, humanities, literature, management, marketing, sales, statistics, psychology, political science, religion and sociology.

Twenty-three telecourses fulfill the general education or foreign language requirements for the associate in arts degree, and an additional eleven telecourses are either degree electives or course prerequisites. All degree requirements are available though televised instruction, with only two exceptions: a three credit hour speech class and a one credit hour laboratory science class. Thus, students may earn an associate in arts degree via distance learning by enrolling in telecourses plus two off-campus evening and/or Saturday classes.

Distance learning has steadily attracted an increasing student audience at FCCJ. As indicated in the following chart, the number of college credit students studying via telecourse increased by 60% between 1990 and 1996.

Academic Year	Courses Offered	Students Served	FTE
1989/90	26	3,976	298.2
1990/91	28	4,698	352.3
1991/92	30	5,522	414.2
1992/93	30	5,255	394.1
1993/94	32	5,407	405.5
1994/95	34	6,012	450.9

FCCJ regularly surveys its telecourse students to determine who enrolls in telecourses, why they chose distance learning, and how the telecourse program can be improved to better meet student needs.

In Winter Term 1995 (January - May), the average telecourse student was white (76%), female (69%), approximately 31 years old, and seeking an associate in arts degree (61%) while employed outside the home (78%). Most telecourse students were enrolling at FCCJ for at least the 4th time (78%) and receiving some form of financial aid (54%).

Telecourse students have at least one VCR (95%), at least two televisions (80%), and have personal access to a computer at home or at work (74%). Only 27% of these students viewed their telecourse lessons during regularly scheduled cablecasts, with 54% videotaping the lessons for more convenient viewing at a later time, 23% visiting a campus learning resource center to view videotaped lessons and 3% renting the videotapes from a private distributor for use on a home VCR.

Why do students enroll in telecourses at FCCJ? Here are two typical student comments from a recent survey: "This program allows me more time for my family obligations..." and "I enjoy the convenience of furthering my education and my career at the same time. Telecourses provide the flexibility to do this." These student comments clearly illustrate the two primary motivations for telecourse enrollment: personal responsibilities and professional commitments. FCCJ's distance learners are working adults with busy personal schedules, attracted by the flexibility and convenience of distance education.

Interestingly, distance education is not the first choice of all telecourse students. Nearly 20% of all telecourse students - about 1200 annually - enrolled as an alternative to full or canceled campus-based classes. Thus, distance education provides FCCJ with a mechanism for serving students who might otherwise have been turned away, and is a complementary component to traditional campus-based instruction.

While it is clear that distance education may be the most convenient and flexible educational opportunity for adults with career and personal commitments, it is not the only avenue for most of FCCJ's telecourse students. Students who study exclusively via telecourses are a minority. Nearly 60% of all telecourse students are concurrently enrolled on campus, discrediting the belief that non-traditional programs are "stealing" students from more traditional programs of study. At FCCJ, distance education and traditional classroom-based programs at FCCJ are sharing students rather than competing for them.

Finally, it is not surprising that most of FCCJ telecourse students enroll in telecourses for the same reasons traditional students enroll in campus-based courses: degree requirements. Fall 1994 survey results indicate that 78% of

telecourse students enrolled to fulfill a degree requirement with another 16% enrolling to complete an elective course for a degree program. Non-traditional community college students are no less practical than other students on campus.

College credit students have another distance learning option besides telecourses at FCCJ. Computer-based courses are offered on the FCCJ's electronic bulletin board service. Distance learners are mailed a diskette with the bulletin board software, "FirstClass", a welcome letter from the instructor and an instruction sheet for installation of the software. The software is free and the connection to the bulletin board is a local telephone call. Students only need an IBM or compatible computer with Windows 3.1 or higher, or a Macintosh, with a 2400 baud modem or higher. Students then access course materials, participate in discussions, and post written assignments to the course instructor.

Faculty members have been attracted by the availability of no-cost, user-friendly software and have expressed interest in delivering more courses completely "on-line" via the bulletin board, while other faculty are developing on-line components for their telecourses or classroom-based courses. The Internet will also be used for an on-line course currently being developed for future delivery.

College credit students at FCCJ also had a distance learning opportunity through a pilot project funded by a National Science Foundation grant. A T-1 line linked faculty and students at two FCCJ campuses in live, interactive teleclasses with voice, video and data, incorporating cooperative learning and discovery learning methodologies. This technology facilitated the delivery of an interdisciplinary mathematics and science distance learning curriculum satisfying the general education requirements of the associate in arts degree.

The second audience served by distance learning at FCCJ are members of the local community interested in professional development, personal enrichment, and informational updates. This audience is served through FCCJ's televised forums, teleconferences, and video productions.

FCCJ's Special Projects Office regularly produces televised community forums, in cooperation with the local PBS television affiliate. For the past four years, FCCJ has produced approximately six forums each year on topics such as crime, education, health care, and government. Videotaped before a live studio audience for later broadcast and focused on an important community issue, each forum is a moderated discussion between an audience of community residents and a panel of prominent experts. One of these forums, "A Line in the Sand: The Mideast Crisis," won the 1991

Florida Association of Community Colleges Community Service Project of the Year Award.

FCCJ also serves the residents of Northeast Florida via teleconferencing. FCCJ's Open Campus downlinks over 150 teleconferences annually, offering a wide range of environmental, educational, professional and business topics of interest to corporations, small businesses, non-profits, governmental agencies and educational institutions. FCCJ is also the designated downlink site in Northeast Florida the statewide satellite teleconferencing network, SUNSTAR. Numerous programs are offered throughout the year including press conferences, public forums, legislative updates and continuing education.

In addition to these teleconference downlinks, FCCJ has also produced and uplinked teleconferences. For example, FCCJ received a contract from the state of Florida to produce, uplink and distribute via satellite timely information on new drug and alcohol legislation. This teleconference provided training to 500 state employees at 17 sites throughout the state. Edited videotapes of this teleconference serve as the basis for on-going training on this legislation.

Another FCCJ television production, much in demand on local cable television, is "Jacksonville: The Inside Story," an award winning series highlighting the history and government of the Jacksonville community.

On a regional level, FCCJ is a leading partner in the Northeast Florida Distance Learning Consortium, representing educational partners from K-12, community college, university, cable and public television, and other educational agencies. This consortium received a grant from the Florida State Board of Regents to develop a conflict resolution curriculum targeting middle school students and their parents, teachers and staff. In support of this grant, FCCJ is completing production of the video components for "A Distance Learning Project in Conflict Resolution."

Finally, FCCJ is a nationally recognized producer of telecourses and video series, reaching a wide market across the United States and Canada. "Read, Write, Research," an English composition telecourse produced by FCCJ, is currently in use by 31 colleges and five consortial groups, and enrolled over 2500 college credit students last year. FCCJ's production list also includes the series "Author, Author!," "Writer to Writer," "Teaching, Learning, Technology," and "Innovative Teaching and Learning." All of these series are in national distribution by PBS/ALSS.

Program Organization

Distance education at FCCJ is a collaboration effort by the assistant instructional dean, telecourse office and television production unit.

Reporting directly to the President of Open Campus, the assistant dean supervises several large college credit programs: telecourses and on-line courses, Weekend College and an accelerated weekend program, and all military education offered at the three U.S. Navy installations in the Jacksonville area. In support of the telecourse program the assistant dean negotiates telecourse licenses, oversees budget and finances, monitors academic quality, previews new telecourses and evaluates program effectiveness. The assistant dean also serves in a leadership role on the national Executive Board of the Instructional Telecommunications Council, an AACC affiliate, and the Florida Community College Television Consortium, a statewide consortium representing the distance learning interests of all 28 Florida community colleges. Active participation in state and national distance learning organizations, provides FCCJ with access to information on recent government legislation, technological developments affecting distance education, and trends in higher education. The assistant dean also manages the marketing of FCCJ telecourse productions.

Day-to-day operation of the telecourse program is the responsibility of a program coordinator, who reports directly to the assistant dean. The program coordinator plans and selects the telecourse offerings each term, develops the television schedule, recruits and trains faculty, manages the development and distribution of course materials, coordinates testing activities, acts as liaison with the college bookstores and learning resource centers, and markets and promotes telecourse. The telecourse program coordinator position is key to the success of distance education.

All technical aspects of telecourse production and delivery, including liaison with cable television operators, programming machines, licensure application and procedures, equipment maintenance, and assurance of broadcast quality are the responsibility of the television production department. Cablecasting of FCCJ telecourses originates in the Open Campus television studio, where videotaped lessons are transmitted via ITFS for telecasting over educational access cable television in a two county area of Northeast Florida. FCCJ's television producer and engineer preview telecourse video materials and approve their technical quality before telelessons are aired.

Faculty are responsible for the academic and instructional integrity of distance education at FCCJ, and hold the same academic and professional qualifications as their colleagues teaching the same discipline on campus. Of the 42 telecourse faculty in Fall Term 1995, 88% are full-time faculty and 12% are adjunct faculty. All faculty hold a minimum of an earned master's degree, with 35% of all telecourses are taught by faculty holding the doctoral degree. Full-time faculty from all five FCCJ campuses teach telecourses. To involve as many interested faculty as possible, telecourse teaching assignments are made on a rotating basis, with adjunct faculty assigned to telecourse instruction when full-time faculty are unavailable.

FCCJ faculty teach telecourses as part of their regular workload or for overload. Compensation is based upon the faculty member's educational qualifications and the number of students enrolled in the telecourse. Telecourse allocations represent the minimum number of students enrolled in a telecourse before any overload compensation is awarded to faculty. These allocations are based upon the amount of written work required of students. Currently, the telecourse allocation for English composition is 30 students, while the allocation for humanities, accounting, foreign languages, economics, computer science, and certain social science courses is 45. All other telecourses are allocated at 60 students.

Faculty teaching telecourses enrolling fewer students than the allocation are guaranteed to receive at least three or four points towards a fifteen-point per term teaching load. Telecourses with enrollment below 20 are usually canceled. Where enrollment exceeds allocation, faculty compensation is increased proportionally.

Faculty teaching telecourses are required to conduct an on-campus orientation for their students and administer telecourse examinations on campus. Faculty communicate regularly with students by telephone and mail to answer questions, comment on tests and homework assignments, and explain other course requirements. Instructors develop the telecourse syllabus which includes telelesson and examination schedules, textbook information, study guide and homework assignments, and other information the instructor deems necessary. All written assignments and examinations are mailed directly to the instructor for evaluation, grading and feedback to students.

College funds are earmarked for operation of the telecourse program with no support from grant sources. An operational budget covers staff salaries, telecourse licenses fees, educational and office materials, and professional development activities. Discipline-specific instructional budgets cover adjunct faculty salaries,

instructional materials, and faculty professional development. A $5 fee is collected each time a student enrolls in a telecourse, with the resulting revenues deposited into a telecourse program contingency fund .

Other FCCJ distance education projects are grant funded, operated on a contractual basis with an outside organization, or are self-supporting activities. Television production is funded by a separate operational budget.

FCCJ has developed innovative models to support and reward faculty involvement with technology. For the past seven years, the college has sponsored an Annual National Conference on Teaching, Learning, and Technology. Over 450 participants at the sixth annual conference held in Jacksonville in April 1995 shared innovative ideas and practical applications of instructional technology to further student learning. Video programs based on the conference are distributed nationally.

FCCJ's Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning sponsors faculty professional development opportunities and awards mini-grants to faculty interested in developing and piloting multimedia course components. The FCCJ Innovative Faculty Technology Award is presented annually to a faculty member who has distinguished herself in the development or application of instructional technology.

Instructional Strategies

Distance education at FCCJ is designed to provide non-traditional students with learning opportunities equivalent in academic content, objectives and outcomes to traditional methods of learning. The technology of distance learning delivery provides flexibility and convenience to working adults returning to college, while the academic quality, learning objectives and course requirements meet accreditation standards.

Faculty are responsible for the academic integrity of telecourses, and ensure that telecourses are the equivalent of the same academic courses taught on campus. All learning goals and objectives, academic content and approach, academic level, evaluation measures and textbooks are equivalent to on-campus offerings. The technological manner in which instruction is delivered to distance learners is the only substantial difference between non-traditional and traditional instruction.

Of the 35 telecourses currently utilized at FCCJ, the majority (86%) are licensed from major telecourse producers and the remainder (15%) are FCCJ productions. Prior to adopting any telecourse, the video component is first

evaluated by the television producer and/or engineer to assure that the technical quality of the video meets or exceeds acceptable broadcast standards. If video standards are not met, the telecourse is not considered by the faculty for adoption.

After technical approval, faculty members with the appropriate academic background review the preview package of videotaped and print components to determine the comparability of academic objectives, content and level with existing college courses, evaluate the overall instructional approach and decide if any adaptation is necessary before offering the telecourse. Faculty approval is necessary before the adoption of any telecourse.

Faculty members then design the course components, including course syllabus, selection of texts, broadcast sequence of lessons, type and number of required written assignments and examinations. They also develop a detailed schedule for the telecourse, assigning specific text materials to be read, lessons to be viewed, assignments to be completed and mailed, and examinations to be taken during each week of the telecourse.

Telecourse students are working independently of their fellow telecourse students, and after the initial orientation session at the start of the term, telecourse students rarely have contact with other students in their telecourse. Faculty are available to their students via telephone conferences. On-campus meetings between telecourse students and faculty may be scheduled but are infrequent, since telecourse students are normally unable to come to campus because of their personal schedules and obligations.

Faculty have similar responsibilities for the academic integrity, content and design of computer-based instruction. But unlike telecourses, there are currently no pre-produced, commercially available computer-based courses for preview and possible adoption. All on-line courses are custom-designed by faculty and allow for greater frequency and ease of faculty-student and student-student interaction. Students may be required to work in teams, or critique or react to each other's written work. Faculty are able to contact students more easily on-line with feedback, encouragement, or concerns. While computer-based instruction may appear on the surface to be less personal an instructional strategy than face-to-face teaching and learning, on-line instruction has promoted more regular and frequent exchanges between students and faculty. Students also appear to be more willing to engage in lively discussions of controversial topics on-line, whereas in the classroom they may have been more reluctant to voice an unpopular opinion or viewpoint.

Students are subject to the same admission policies, placement testing requirements, and course prerequisites whether they enroll in a course delivered in the classroom on via technology. All students have access to touch-tone telephone registration during regularly scheduled college registration periods.

Distance learning course schedules are scheduled during the regular college terms: Fall Term (August - December, 15 weeks), Winter Term (January - May, 15 weeks), Spring Term (May - June, 6-weeks), Cross Term (May - August, 12 weeks) and Summer Term (July - August, 6 weeks). However, distance learning courses more readily accommodate late registrations since telecourse lessons are available on videotape in all campus learning resource centers, and all on-line courses post lectures, assignments and syllabus on the electronic bulletin board. There is a special late registration period for telecourses and on-line courses since students may work at their own pace and easily make-up missed lessons.

There are currently no open-entry, open-exit distance learning programs at FCCJ. With the exception of extended registration periods, distance learners study during traditional terms, with final examinations are administered and final grades awarded during traditional examinations and grading periods. Future plans for distance education at FCCJ include more flexible options, including registration upon demand and a variety of accelerated formats.

The other telecommunications-based programs at FCCJ - teleconferences, televised public forums, and television productions - are non-credit continuing education opportunities, and therefore do not involve the enrollment of participants as FCCJ students.

The one exception is the telecourse productions, specifically designed for the enrollment of college credit students. Telecourse production at FCCJ is a lengthy process which includes a needs assessment, instructional design, formative evaluation, advisory committees and subject matter experts as key components. Production decisions also take funding, timelines and technical needs into consideration. A thoughtful discussion of telecourse production strategies requires more space than is available in this brief chapter.

Technologies Employed

FCCJ utilizes a variety of instructional technologies to facilitate student learning at a distance, including Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS), microwave and satellite technologies, cablecasting and public television broadcasting, T-1 lines, fiber optics, voice-mail, a computer bulletin board, the

Internet and videotape production and duplication. The target audience, program content and objectives determine the technology used.

Faculty and telecourse students interact regularly via telephone, voice-mail, U.S. mail, and in person. Future plans also include the establishment of voice-mail for each registered telecourse student to promote further interaction.

As mentioned previously, faculty teaching on-line interact with their students via the college electronic bulletin board service, offered via "FirstClass" software. The only service currently not on-line is the initial mailing of a welcome letter from the faculty member, a free software diskette, and installation instructions. Some faculty currently designing additional on-line courses will require students to take written examinations on campus.

FCCJ has a home page on the World Wide Web, with links to other college pages dedicated to specific program information. The instructional broadcast schedule on cable television is available on the Web, and a page for the telecourse and on-line programs is currently "under construction." The Internet will also be utilized in the future as another vehicle for the delivery of college-credit instruction.

While satellite technology is the basis of all teleconferencing activities at FCCJ, interaction in teleconferences is conducted via telephone. Other pilot projects have contained two-way audio and video communication between faculty and students via either T-1 lines or compressed video satellite systems.

To address the choices presented by the speed and frequency of technological change and the variety of delivery systems on the market, FCCJ has established a technology planning team, tasked with the design and development of a comprehensive strategic technology plan to integrate voice, video and data for implementation college-wide. To meet this ambitious goal, an RFP was issued, responses carefully evaluated, and a consulting firm selected. As this chapter is written, consultants have begun work on this technology plan.

Student access to technology is another important issue. While 74% of telecourse students have personal access to computers either at work or at home, the majority of these computers have no fax/modem, no communications software and no access to any on-line services (Compuserve, AOL, Prodigy, or the Internet). Equal access to technology for all students must be incorporated into FCCJ's technology plan.

Student Services

All students are subject to the same admission policies, placement testing requirements, and course prerequisites whether they enroll in a course delivered in the classroom on via technology. Distance learners also have equal access to student services as on campus students.

Admissions are handled primarily through the mail, with transcripts of transfer credits transmitted electronically. Student records for distance learners are identical in form and content to records maintained for on-campus students. There is no differentiation on transcripts between courses taught on campus or via technology.

All students may register for college credit courses via touch-tone telephone. Students may add or drop classes, designate alternate classes if their first choices are already full, and pay tuition and fees with a credit card via touch-tone telephone. Thirty-two telephone lines available during peak registration periods. Students may also choose to remit payment via U.S. mail.

Distance learners have the same access to learning resources and support as on campus students. Each campus has a librarian to serve its students. Even though Open Campus does not have its own library collection, a fully qualified librarian has been assigned to the Open Campus to assist students who study via distance learning. This librarian conducts special library orientations for distance learners, and assists students conducting research.

Learning resource centers are open days, evenings and weekends to accommodate a variety of student schedules. The Library Information Network for Interlibrary Loan (LINCC) allows students to electronically review the catalogs of library collections at all Florida community colleges, and to access pertinent information through interlibrary loan. Distance learners also have access to a variety of learning support including tutorial help at all campuses and centers.

Automatically mailed to students when they enroll in telecourses, the telecourse packet includes the course syllabus, faculty contact information, homework, testing, and broadcast schedules, tape rental and textbook information, and college policies and administrative procedures for telecourses. Students enrolled in computer-based courses have immediate on-line access to all course information, including the syllabus, and faculty contact, assignment, testing and grading information.

Students may order instructional materials from any campus bookstore via telephone or fax for direct shipment to the student's home or for campus pickup at a later date. Textbooks, software, audio tapes, study guides, and other course materials

may be obtained through this delivery service. Students also have the option of renting telecourse tapes from a private distribution house, which will ship the video series to the student's home. Free software to access FCCJ's electronic bulletin board is mailed to all registered students, who also have the option of downloading the software.

The telecourse office is the primary provider of administrative and procedural advice to distance learners. Information on college policies, deadlines, and procedures is included in the telecourse syllabus mailed to the student's home. In addition, information screens containing orientation and testing dates and sites, and other time-sensitive telecourse information are regularly and frequently cablecast between programs.

Open Campus also has a telephone line dedicated to providing pre-recorded telecourse updates 24 hours a day. Student questions or concerns that require special attention are referred to the assistant dean or appropriate college office.

Open Campus is equipped with a TDD for communication with disabled students, and all telecourse staff are trained in its use. In addition, programs produced at the college are closed captioned for the hearing-impaired. When closed captioning is not available, telelesson transcripts are made available to students requesting this accommodation. FCCJ's Disabled Student Services Center is always available to provide necessary services and accommodations to distance learners with special needs, including note-takers, interpreters, readers, and other assistance to facilitate student access and success.

FCCJ is currently negotiating an articulation agreement with a four-year university to give students who have earned a two-year associate degree from FCCJ the option of completing a bachelors degree via distance learning. Designed specifically for working adults, distance learners will be able to complete bachelors degrees regardless of location professional obligations or personal time constraints.

Student Grading and Program Evaluation

Faculty members evaluate student progress through written assignments and examinations, provide feedback directly to students and assign grades. Written assignments may include term papers, research projects, business plans, textbook exercises, book reports, or other assignments. Faculty-developed written examinations range from essay to multiple choice questions. Faculty have the responsibility and authority to determine what assignments and examinations will be required of students

FCCJ has designed a convenient, secure testing service to accommodate distance learners throughout Jacksonville. Students may choose to take their examinations on campus with the instructor, or at one of the alternate testing locations administered by the telecourse office. Alternate testing is available at four locations in two counties in the evenings and on weekends, and students are required to present two forms of personal identification, one of which must be a picture I.D., before admission to the testing room.

At the start of the term, each student must choose one testing time/location where she will take all examinations for that particular course. Coordination of the testing function is a major undertaking by the telecourse office, since an average telecourse requires 3-4 written examinations of each registered student. In the Fall Term 1996 alone, approximately 3,000 examinations were administered by this testing service.

With grading standards and policies clearly stated in their course syllabi, faculty are strongly encouraged to grade in the same manner they normally employ for on campus courses. Many faculty members use the same assignments, examinations and grading techniques and scale that they use on campus. The only college personnel with the authority to award or change grades are the faculty.

The distance education program at FCCJ is continuously improved through feedback from faculty, student and staff evaluations. Each term students evaluate the quality of service provided by staff and faculty, and rate the components and design of telecourses. Student evaluations are anonymous and conducted after final grades have been assigned, and written comments are encouraged. This system of student course evaluations was recently automated to allow a more thorough analysis of the data collected.

Students who register and subsequently withdraw from distance education are also surveyed each term to determine the reason for their withdrawals. These surveys are also anonymous, with written comments encouraged. This withdrawal survey has been particularly helpful in explaining the higher rates of withdrawal from telecourses as compared to classroom-based courses. Withdrawal surveys consistently indicate that distance learners withdraw from telecourses for the same reasons for which they originally registered: busy personal schedules and personal obligations.

For example, in the Winter Term 1995, 69% of students who withdrew from telecourses stated that their withdrawals were due to personal reasons, with many citing changes in job schedules, required business travel, or family obligations. The

majority of these students admitted that they had never contacted the instructor (58%), never contacted the telecourse office (66%), never submitted required assignments (52%), and never took an examination (57%). Yet most of these students (55%) indicated that they intended to enroll in telecourses again and another 20% said they would consider enrolling in telecourses in the future.

Finally, grade distributions are analyzed and compared to student achievement in the same courses offered on campus, and faculty input is regularly solicited by program staff, who note problems to be solved or innovations to be implemented.

Improvement in distance education have resulted from the careful analysis of this faculty, student and staff feedback. Courses and testing sites have been added, broadcast schedules adjusted, course materials revised, examinations rewritten, brochures redesigned, and opportunities identified. Most of the statistical information included in this chapter was gathered from student surveys.

Unique & Exemplary Activities

In 1991-1993 FCCJ participated in a pilot project funded by a special appropriation in the U.S. Department of Defense budget. The purpose of this project was to determine the feasibility of community colleges reconfiguring site-based military occupational specialty (MOS) training and then delivering this reconfigured curriculum via video teletraining to multiple sites in Florida.

FCCJ utilized the U.S. Army 's teletraining network, "TNET," a two-way compressed video satellite communications system as its delivery system. Training originated in Jacksonville at FCCJ and was then transmitted via the "TNet" system to receive sites at Valencia Community College in Orlando, and St. Petersburg Junior College. An additional receive site was also established at FCCJ to allow project evaluators the opportunity to observe and assess training activities at the origination and receive sites in a single visit.

FCCJ designed, developed and delivered this distance learning curriculum, utilizing community college faculty and military subject matter experts to train Army reservists and the National Guard. FCCJ collaborated with the University of Central Florida, Valencia Community College, and St. Petersburg Junior College to reconfigure the MOS training curriculum used by the Army in its traditional site-based training. The resulting teletraining curriculum satisfied the requirements of both the MOS and college credit courses. So military service members participating

in this teletraining pilot could earn both MOS certification and college credit for the same course of study.

This pilot program produced a distance learning curriculum and an instructional model, as well as print and video materials for the U.S. Department of Defense. It also developed a cadre of community college faculty and staff trained in state-of-the-art interactive video technology, provided military service members with MOS certification and some college credit, and received a positive evaluation by the Institute for Simulation and Training at UCF.

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